

States is lifting our ban on direct flights to Murtala Muhammed Airport in Lagos, Nigeria.

I congratulate President Obasanjo and his government for taking the steps necessary to remove this ban, including the overhauling of Nigeria's airport security system. These important reforms provided one more indication of the Nigerian administration's commitment to good governance. They offer new evidence that Nigeria is reversing the damage that years of corruption and mismanagement inflicted upon its international reputation.

I am deeply gratified to see a government chosen by the Nigerian people earning the trust and respect of the world. I look forward to strengthening our partnership with Nigeria even further over the coming year.

NOTE: In his statement, the President referred to President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria.

Message on the Observance of Kwanzaa, 1999

December 22, 1999

Warm greetings to everyone celebrating Kwanzaa.

With roots in the ancient history and cultural traditions of Africa and celebrating such fundamental American values as unity and self-determination, this joyous annual festival reflects the diversity that gives our nation much of its strength and resilience. Each year during Kwanzaa, millions of African Americans gather with family and friends to celebrate their rich heritage, to reaffirm the bonds of family and community, and to give thanks to our Creator for the beauty and bounty of life.

As we look forward to the new millennium, we must not lose sight of the values and traditions that have strengthened and sustained us in the past. The seven principles of Kwanzaa—unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith—can be invaluable tools in teaching us how to live together in the 21st century as a community, in harmony with one another and our environment and in humility before God.

Hillary joins me in extending warmest wishes for a joyous Kwanzaa and every happiness in the coming year.

Bill Clinton

Interview With Larry King of CNN's "Larry King Live"

December 22, 1999

Cabinet Room

Mr. King. Good evening. We're in the Cabinet Room at the White House in this Christmas season. It's a great pleasure to have as our special guest, as part of our millennium month, the President of the United States, Bill Clinton. Do you spend a lot of time—do you have a lot of Cabinet meetings?

The President. I do. And I have a lot of other meetings in here, like with individual Cabinet members. I met this week with three or four different Cabinet members and extended staff here. So we have large meetings in here.

Mr. King. This room is, like, right off the Oval Office?

The President. That's right, right off the Oval Office.

Mr. King. Did they plan it that way so the President could run right in and meet with—how often do you have Cabinet meetings?

The President. I don't have too many full Cabinet meetings, because we have 23 members of the Cabinet plus Chief of Staff. So I have a few of those a year, when we have to do a review and get all geared into one issue or another. But I have a lot of meetings with various Cabinet officials in this room and with maybe more than one who are all working on a common project.

Year 2000 Problems

Mr. King. We have a lot to talk about, and I want to get an overview as we look ahead to this millennium but cover some current things. I guess the thing everybody is talking about is, should we be frightened? That's the basis of the State Department yesterday—should we travel; should we stay home? We're told the Cabinet members have

been asked to stay home or stay in Washington. Is that true?

The President. The Cabinet members are staying here, but it's really just as a precaution, because we feel a high level of confidence about where we are with the Y2K problems. We've been working on this for years. We've spent a lot of money on it; we've tried to get all the private sector involved. All the big systems in this country, I think—airline travel, banking systems, electrical systems, Social Security checks—all those things I think are in good shape. We're here partly as a precaution and partly so, if any of our friends in other parts of the world have any trouble, we can all be there to give whatever help we can.

Year 2000 Terrorism

Mr. King. And how about the terrorism threat, where people are asked to be careful, especially overseas, and we have these arrests occurring in Washington and Vermont?

The President. Well, what I would say to the American people about that is that we know that at the millennium, a lot of people who may even be a little crazy by our standards or may have a political point to make, may try to take advantage of it. So we are on a heightened state of alert. We're working very hard on it. No one can guarantee that nothing will happen. But all I can say is we're working very hard.

And my advice to the American people would be to go on about their business and do what they would intend to do at the holiday season but to be a little more aware of people and places where they find themselves. And if you see something suspicious, well, call us and let us know. Call the authorities. We're working very, very hard on this. And if it were me, I would not just refrain from activities. I'm going to go out and do my Christmas shopping. I'm going to do what I normally do.

Mr. King. Are you saying if you have a hunch about something, go to the hunch?

The President. If you have a hunch about something, if you see something that's suspicious, you should report it, just to make sure that we do everything we possibly can to maximize our protection. But I wouldn't just hunker down until it was all over.

Mr. King. Colin Powell says that maybe by doing all this, you've scared them off. You know, if you make people fear the alert so much, that might cause terrorists to have a second thought.

The President. Well, they should have a second thought, because we're working it hard.

Mr. King. In cooperation with other nations?

The President. Absolutely.

Vice President Al Gore's Offer To Debate

Mr. King. All right. Let's discuss some things political—one of your main—you know that. Do you agree with Al Gore's request to have debates? "Forget all the advertising. Let's debate."

The President. Well, I think it's an interesting idea. I don't want to get into hand-capping the campaign. I think that the more debates they have, the better. I'm very proud to be a member of my party when I see those two debate. They're smart. They have their ideas. You know I favor the Vice President and not just because I feel personally loyal to him. I think he's been by light-years the best Vice President this country has ever had, by a long, long way. But I think the fact that he and Bill Bradley are out there talking about education; they're talking about health care; they're talking about biomedical research; and they know what they're talking about; and they've thought about these things—I think it's a very substantive, good thing. And that's what I think elections ought to be about, so I'm proud of that.

Mr. King. Were you surprised at the idea, though, to say, let's forget—you know, Goldwater and Kennedy were going to do that.

The President. I was surprised. And I must say I find it quite interesting. I was intrigued by it. If someone had offered me that in 1992, I probably would have done it.

Mr. King. Would have taken it?

The President. Yes, probably, because I think we need to find out whether we can have elections without the kind of money that they cost today, and we can't have them without that kind of money unless people can have access, the candidates can have access to the voters. That is, what costs all the money is access to the voters.

Mr. King. Barry Goldwater had told me that he and John Kennedy had arranged that if Goldwater would be the nominee in '64, had Kennedy lived, they were going to travel around together.

The President. I think it would have been wonderful. I still think it would be great. And I'd like to see it happen in a general election. I don't think it's necessary for the voters to be for one person but think that the other person is a bad person. And I think it's very bad development in our politics. I think it's one reason that the voting percentage goes down; people think, ugh. So if there could be a way to be more and more debates, not only now but in the general election, I think it would be a good thing for American democracy. I did three last time and three the time before, but I would have done six or seven or however many. I believe in this.

Candidate Bill Bradley

Mr. King. You say, of course, you're supporting your Vice President. What do you think of Bill Bradley, though?

The President. Oh, I've known him for many years. I like him. He's a very smart man. He's had a very interesting life, and he's got an interesting take on things.

Mr. King. Do you ever think they might run together?

The President. They'd be a good ticket. [Laughter] It would be a good ticket.

Challenges of a Vice Presidential Campaign

Mr. King. Kennedy could run with Johnson. You picked a man from a neighboring State to run with you. Do you understand the difficulty of a Vice President running?

The President. Yes.

Mr. King. That's not easy, is it?

The President. No. But it gets easier as time goes on, and people focus on it. And it's easier now than it was 100 years ago, I think. But I think that, as I said—when Harry Truman became President, he didn't even know about the atomic bomb.

Mr. King. Did not.

The President. And we had already lost five or six Presidents in office by the time he became President. Since then, there has

been an increasing level of seriousness given to the job. Lyndon Johnson was a major figure, and Richard Nixon was a major figure. Both of them had responsibility in office. Then President Carter upped the ante more; Vice President Mondale had far more responsibility than anybody had before. President Reagan, to his credit, gave President Bush a lot of responsibility. But no Vice President has ever had the range of responsibility and the level of achievement, accordingly, that Al Gore has had, whether it was in our technology policy, our environmental policy, our foreign policy, the economic empowerment of poor areas. I could just go on and on.

Mr. King. So there is nothing he isn't abreast of?

The President. No.

Mr. King. If something happened to you, there's not surprise we have to tell him?

The President. No. There would be nothing—if something were to happen to me tonight, he could become President, and there would be nothing he wouldn't know, no person he hadn't met, no issue he hadn't dealt with.

Mr. King. We'll be right back with the President of the United States, Bill Clinton, at this Christmas season. Don't go away.

[At this point, CNN took a commercial break.]

Trade Debate and the Seattle Round

Mr. King. Speaking of debates, it was Vice President Gore's idea, we just reminded each other, to debate Perot. And I understand you were the only one here that agreed with that.

The President. In the beginning.

Mr. King. There was a lot of disagreement.

The President. They all thought there was a lot of downside to it. But I wish we had more debates in recent years on trade policy, because it's such a controversial thing. Everybody is for selling more of our exports. Everybody has the feeling, because we have a big trade deficit, that people take advantage of us. People are worried about losing their jobs, even though the unemployment rate is at a 30-year low. And I think we need to continue to debate this. I wish we had more

of them. I hope there will be some trade debates in this election.

Mr. King. Did Seattle throw you, Mr. President? I ask that because Governor Bush was with us last week, and he agrees completely with you on the trade issue, but he said he thought—I'm paraphrasing—that you kind of copped out, that you didn't forcefully attack those people who were demonstrating, you sort of rode the middle.

The President. Well, first of all, I attacked those who were violent in no uncertain terms. And I said to those who were demonstrating for a cleaner environment or for decent labor standards that I thought their concerns were legitimate but their opposition to the trade agreement was wrong. And that's what I believe. And I think that we're a little different on that. I mean, I strongly agree, and most Republicans that apparently agree with me that we ought to have expanded trade.

We benefit, not just from the exports; we also benefit from the influence. You've got an—time, so do I. We benefit in that an open market enables us to grow and still have to compete, and that keeps inflation down. One of the reasons—in February we're going to have the longest economic expansion in the history of the country, and we did it with three things. We did it with getting rid of the debt—deficit; we did it with investing in technology and people; and we did it with opening our borders in trading and continuing to compete, because usually, when you have this kind of economic growth, inflation takes over and kills the recovery. That hasn't happened. So I think this is very important.

But the difference between me and most Republicans is that I believe that globalization is inevitable. But people are scared of all this change, and what we have to do is to convince them that change can be their friend. And the way to do it is to say, "Okay, we're going to compete, and we're going to win over the long run, and we're going to win in the short run, but we should grow the economy in a way that improves the environment, and we should do it in a way that respects core labor standards: no forced labor, no child labor, no abusive working conditions."

Mr. King. Did Seattle surprise you?

The President. No. I think—I knew there would be a lot of people there. I was surprised the first night at the level of violence. I didn't know that there would be so many, basically, creeps there who would try to—

Mr. King. Who instigated it, you mean?

The President. Yes, throw rocks—there was just a very small percentage of those thousands of people who were doing this. There were probably a couple of hundred people who were prepared to throw rocks at stores and take other violent action.

Most of them were there to express their opposition to some aspect or another of this process of globalization, but they cannot turn the clock back. The world is better off than it would have been if we hadn't had 50 years of increasing economic integration, and America has won big these last 7 years by being involved. And we are making a huge mistake, in my judgment, if we don't continue to both expand trade and work for better core labor standards in a better environment.

Mr. King. Do the unions then not understand this? They're the biggest supporters your party has—the trade unions in America have been.

The President. They're divided. If you look at Seattle, for example, there are 170,000 union members in and around Seattle. And most of them have jobs in part because their companies are so tied to trade. I went to York, Pennsylvania, the other day to the Harley Davidson motorcycle factory, something most—at least most guys and an increasing number of women can identify with. They've got a year's backlog, and 25 percent of the Harleys are sold overseas, and the biggest foreign market is now Japan, which makes the only competitors to Harley and motorcycles. So I think it just depends.

Some unions feel that their jobs might be undercut by the importation of textile or clothing goods or shoes or whatever, but on balance, we have won big as a country by opening our markets, showing we're not afraid to compete, and asking others to open their markets, too, to be fair, whether it's farmers or manufacturers or people in entertainment or people in the information technology business.

Final Year of the President's Term

Mr. King. Is it tough going into a last year? I ask that because we sat together here quite a few times. I remember once we were looking out, and you said to me, "You know, my bad days are good days."

The President. Absolutely. I love this job.

Mr. King. You love this job.

The President. I do.

Mr. King. You—

The President. And I'll miss it. People ask me all the time, "What will you miss most? Will it be living in the White House, going to Camp David, getting on Air Force One?" The job is what I'll miss most, the work. There is no place in the world where you can come in contact with so many different kinds of people and so many different kinds of issues and have so much opportunity to do good or stop bad things from happening.

But the hard thing about it now is you want to do everything, and you have to be disciplined. You have to figure out what can I do, what can I put out there that the country ought to do that maybe can't be done while I'm here. I never want to sleep. I realize the days are going by, and I just want to keep working. I just want to do everything I can.

Mr. King. We'll be back with the working President right after this.

[At this point, CNN took a commercial break.]

Gays in the Military

Mr. King. We are reevaluating, are we, "don't ask, don't tell"?

The President. Well, I think the candidates are. A lot of them are saying it should be changed.

Mr. King. What do you think?

The President. I tried to have a different policy. I tried to say gays should be able to serve in the military—

Mr. King. Period?

The President. Without lying about it. But if the military code of justice says that homosexual acts are illegal, if they keep it, then they'd have to observe that. But when we went to "don't ask, don't tell," it was all we could get through the Congress. The Congress had a veto-proof majority to reverse the policy I recommended.

Now a new administration and new Members of Congress, they're free to do something different. What we're doing now—in August, we issued some new guidelines to try to correct some of the abuses, because the policy, as it was articulated in '93, has been often abused, and that's what's led to some of these expulsions, some of this harassment.

The Secretary of Defense is absolutely committed to faithfully implementing the policy. It's really "don't ask, don't tell," don't pursue, under those circumstances.

Mr. King. So it's not the policy that's wrong?

The President. No, I didn't say that. I recommended a different policy, but the policy is better than the results. That is, if the policy were faithfully applied, we would not have many of the problems that we've had these last few years, and I think the Secretary of Defense and the leadership of the Pentagon is now—with these new guidelines and with the work they're doing to try to make sure people are trained and they understand they're not supposed to go in and harass people and what can and cannot trigger an inquiry, I think we can make it better now.

Gay and Lesbian Rights

Mr. King. How much—we know about your interest and the gains we've made in the racial area and still a long way to go. How are we doing in that area, in the homosexual area in this country, with regards to acceptance, do you think?

The President. I think we've come a long way. We're a long way from where we were just in '92 and '93. I think vast majorities of the American people support hate crimes legislation that protects gays as well as people with different racial and religious backgrounds. I think most Americans strongly support nondiscrimination in the workplace and would vote for the "Employment Non-Discrimination Act" if they were in Congress. I hope that the Congress will vote for it this year, this next year.

I think that—the real problem, I still believe, is the absence of open, personal contact. I think—

Mr. King. We don't know it—

The President. I think there are too many people who don't know gay men and lesbian women in the ordinary course of their lives, and they don't see that there are people who—their friends, their sisters, their brothers, their sons, their daughters, their co-workers, and that it is—my judgment is, it's not a lifestyle people choose. It is the way people are. It's too hard—it's too hard a life for people to just up and—

Mr. King. Why choose it?

The President. —up and choose it. I think that—and I think that my view is that every American that works hard, obeys the law, plays by the rules ought to be treated with dignity and respect and have a part in our American family. That's what I believe.

Mr. King. Do you agree with the Vermont judiciary that while marriage may be wrong, they are entitled, couples who live together who are gay, to equal benefits?

The President. I do. I think that's a good thing. That's always been my position, that—you've got gay couples that, for example, have been together for years now. One of them—and I'm beginning to think about this, because I'm moving into this age bracket now—one of them has a heart attack; one of them gets sick; one of them is in the intensive care unit in the hospital; and only family members can come in; and sometimes they're not allowed in—that kind of thing.

You know, I think that—in terms of health care coverage at work or in terms of property and willing of property to your closest family member, that sort of thing, I think they ought to be able to do that.

Mr. King. But not marry?

The President. Well, marriage in our culture and to me has a certain connotation, meaning for me, that has not gotten me to where I could accept that, because I think it's basically a union for the purpose of, among other things, having children and—so that's why I've never supported the term of marriage, although there are a lot of increasing numbers of people, even in the clergy, who believe that they should be able to do that.

Mr. King. We'll be back with more of President Clinton. We've got an overview here on the millennium and some other things after this.

[At this point, CNN took a commercial break.]

Reimbursement of Legal Fees

Mr. King. We're in the Cabinet Room at the White House with President Clinton. Touch some other bases. The Washington Post said that you're applying to the Government to reimburse for legal fees. True?

The President. That's not true.

Mr. King. Not true?

The President. Not true. I've never—I've never considered doing that.

Mr. King. So where did that story come from?

The President. I think it was leaked from the Independent Counsel's Office. That's the way the story read to me. But—

Mr. King. You don't want—

The President. I think that they've cost the taxpayers enough money already.

Mr. King. So even if you were entitled legally—

The President. I may be entitled to it, but my instinct is not to do it. But I've really never had a discussion about it. My instinct is not to do it. I've been very fortunate. I've had this legal defense fund; people have helped me pay for my legal fees. The travesty in this thing is the way the law is written. You can only get your legal fees if you're a target of an investigation but you're not charged. So if you're charged and acquitted, you can't get them, and if you never were a target, you can't get them.

So the thing that I think is just tragic is you have no idea how many completely innocent people that were harassed repeatedly and called into hearings and called into this, that, and the other thing—everybody knew they never did anything wrong, but I mean, not just one interview which you could understand but over and over and over again, so that they have these massive legal bills, and they're not eligible for any reimbursement at all.

So I've been trying to figure out how to help them pay their legal bills. That's what I wish I could apply for. I wish there was some fund where I could get some money for them to pay their bills, because a lot of these people—they're not President; they're

not like me; they can't have a legal defense fund that would pay their bills off.

Independent Counsel's Investigation

Mr. King. How did you emotionally hold up through all that?

The President. I'm here. [Laughter]

Mr. King. I know. What is it? Some sort of inner thing in you, get up off the floor, the comeback kid approach? Is that part of your structure? Where does that come from?

The President. I think there are two things, really. One is what you said. All my life, I was raised to believe that you should never give in and never give up. If somebody hits you and knocks you down, you were supposed to get up, not give up. And I also deeply believed—one thing I knew, the White-water thing was a total fraud, and I thought the people who were pursuing it knew it was a fraud at some point. They had to, especially 4-something years ago, when the Government report came out, the RTC report saying that neither my wife or I had done anything wrong and had detailed millions of dollars in explanations showing that.

The other thing was that I'm—in the last couple of years, I had to come to terms with a lot of things. I prayed a lot; I thought a lot; I sought a lot of advice; I had a lot of help from really good people, here and around the world. A lot of the people I served with, world leaders, called and talked to me.

Mr. King. Are you surprised at that?

The President. I was touched by it beyond belief. Some of the conversations I had with people like Nelson Mandela, I've carried with me all my life. It's just unbelievable.

Mr. King. They were there for you?

The President. Yes.

Mr. King. And that was part of the—

The President. But here—but also, letters I got from, you know, kids around America. You wouldn't believe the letters I got from—

Mr. King. Really?

The President. Yes, unbelievable letters. And letters I got from religious leaders and people that taught philosophy and thought about these things. It was just—and I also had a lot of counseling, a lot of help from these ministers who came in and met with me, and my wife and daughter had a lot to

do with it. Hillary and Chelsea had a lot to do with it.

Former Advisers in the Media

Mr. King. Are you hurt by the Dick Morrises, the Stephanopouloses who write books, who write columns, become part of the media sometimes, in Morris's case, often a very critical—a guy you were pretty close to? Does that hurt you?

The President. Well, first of all, I am very grateful for the overwhelming loyalty that I've enjoyed from people who could have made a lot of money by dumping on me because that's what sells and the kind of media culture they were in. And I have enjoyed an extraordinary degree of it.

I've also had a lot of stability. A lot of people have stayed with me the whole time. So let me start with my gratitude. When Dick first started going on television and saying those things, he used to call somebody here in the office and apologize in advance and just say, "You know, I've got to do this. It's the only way I can get on television."

Mr. King. Really?

The President. Oh, sure. I mean, it's a game. It's a game. I know that. And so it's hard for me to take it seriously. I think that a lot of the things that he has said, he knows downright aren't true, and I feel bad for him because I think you pay a terrible price when you do that over and over and over again.

Mr. King. You feel bad for him?

The President. Yes, I do. I feel really bad for him.

Mr. King. He's attacked your wife a lot, too.

The President. Yes. And he's said a lot of things that he just knows aren't so. And so I feel badly for him. But I don't—I can't be mad at him.

With George, it's a different story. I think he's a brilliant man and basically a good person. But when George entered politics, he entered as a boy wonder. He came right in with Dick Gephardt, you know, and he assumed great responsibilities because he's a person of—he works like crazy, and he's smart, and he's basically good-hearted in a lot of ways. But he was, I think, always affected by being basically a Washington politician.

I remember when I was attacked in the New Hampshire primary, and everybody said, "He's dead, and he ought to get out," and all that, George was asking, "Well, should we withdraw?" And James Carville and I, who grew up in the country, you know, out there with the folks, we looked at him and said, "George, if the people want me to withdraw, they will withdraw me at election time. That's what you've got elections for."

And I think that—I think he's probably more comfortable now being a part of the professional critics of the Washington establishment, the media establishment. I think that's where he's—I think he's comfortable there. That's where he started in politics, and I think that's just where he is.

Criticism of the President

Mr. King. Do those pundits in general bother—do they get at you? Some guy—Truman wrote that famous note when he got mad. Some people let it slide off—

The President. I've got that note, you know.

Mr. King. You have the actual note?

The President. Yes. One of the great little stories of my Presidency is Steve Forbes gave me that letter that Truman wrote.

Mr. King. Steve Forbes?

The President. I've always been grateful to him.

Mr. King. SOB he called that writer.

The President. Yes, he said, "You'll need a new nose, a lot of beefsteak for black eyes, and perhaps a"—[laughter]—

Mr. King. Do you ever watch "Larry King Live" or "Meet The Press" or somebody—do you get mad?

The President. No, the truth is I never watch them. I never watch the Sunday talk shows.

Mr. King. You don't watch Sunday morning?

The President. Never. And the only time I ever see any of these other programs is if I'm channel surfing late at night and I happen to run into them. I watch your program sometimes when you're interviewing somebody I want to hear from.

Mr. King. But basically, you don't turn on "Meet The Press" or—

The President. Never. Never. And if I did, what good would that do me? I mean—

Mr. King. Except make you mad.

The President. Yes. If someone—if I read a column, like an op-ed column, of someone who says, I think the Clinton administration policy is all wet on this for these reasons, I read that, because Benjamin Franklin said, "Our critics are our friends. They show us our faults." But I cannot—you can't afford to be angry as President. If you're angry all the time over things people say about you—you can be angry about what happens to the American people. But if you're angry about what happens to you, then you're wasting a lot of time and emotional energy that belongs to the American people. And you're not going to make good decisions. So nothing really good can come with that.

Mr. King. You really feel like an employee of the people?

The President. Yes.

Mr. King. We'll be back with some more moments with President Clinton from the Cabinet Room in the White House. Don't go away.

[At this point, CNN took a commercial break.]

President's Legacy

Mr. King. We're back with President Clinton. I want to read something that was given to me today. The last time—not the last time, we've been together many times, but the night Vince Foster died, you were on television together, in this building. We were the last two to know about it.

The President. Yes. We were going to go another half hour, and McLarty came on and said, "You can't do it."

Mr. King. Mack McLarty came in and said, "You've got to get off now." And you were mad. Why? Because you even said, "Am I not doing well?" But anyway, that aside, the last question to you that night was called in by someone asking you, even though you had only been a year, less than a year in office, what do you think your legacy will be. Here's what you said: "I'll be happy to tell you. Number one, I'd like to get the economy moving again." This is 6 years ago. "Number two, I'd like to provide health security for

all Americans. Number three, I want my national service plan to pass to open doors of college education to millions of Americans. Number four, I strongly want to pass a welfare reform bill that will move people from welfare to work. And five, I want to reform the political system.”

Reading this, how have you done?

The President. We’ve done well.

Mr. King. Three out of five.

The President. Yes. And we’ve made—we’ve done some really good things in health care; we just haven’t been able to have universal access. And I finally got—I’m very proud of this—we had 100 percent of my party vote for the McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform. So we now have unified the Democratic Party for our campaign finance reform, and it’s just a question of whether the other party will come along now. So I think that will happen.

I feel very good about what’s happened these last 6 years. We’ve done a lot of other things as well, and we’ve been able to advance the cause of peace in Northern Ireland, the Middle East, the Balkans.

President’s Disappointment

Mr. King. Biggest disappointment?

The President. I don’t know what the biggest disappointment is. I’m sorry we were not able to have more progress in health care, but we may have some this year. The main thing is I feel this enormous gratitude because I think our country is ending this century on such a high note, and I really do think we built our bridge to the 21st century.

Hillary Clinton’s Senate Campaign

Mr. King. And are you going to campaign for Hillary?

The President. If she wants me to, and if I can be helpful, I am. But I think that there’s a time for that. I think in the beginning people want to know who she is, what she believes, what she will do as a Senator, and they’ll want to see her. And I need to be as supportive of her as I can. There will come a time when I can perhaps help her in the campaign. The people of New York have been wonderful to me, and I’m very grateful for that. But they want to make an

independent judgment about her, so I have to be careful about when I do it and how I do it. But if and when I can help, I will do whatever I can to help, because first of all, for her, I want her to win. But secondly, she would be absolutely unbelievable if she were a Senator. I mean, it would be unbelievable. It would be such a gift for the people of New York and America. I’ve never known anybody, ever, who had her combination of intellect and passion and organizing ability and absolutely consuming devotion to public service.

Mr. King. Our common friends in California tell me you were going to move to New York, you and Hillary, no matter what.

The President. That’s correct. She told me—when we got elected in ’92, I said, “Okay, ever since we’ve been married, we’ve lived where I wanted to live; we’ve done what I wanted to do. Now, when we get out of here, I’ve got to go home; I’m going to build my library and build my center, but that’s my gift to my State. And I’m going to spend some time there, and we’ll spend the rest of the time wherever you want to say.” And she said, “I want to go to New York.” That’s what she told me when we moved up here. I bet it was the first week or 2 we were here.

Mr. King. Seven years ago.

The President. Yes.

Mr. King. Happy holidays.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview was videotaped at 5:56 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House for later broadcast. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 23. In his remarks, the President referred to Gen. Colin Powell, USA (Ret.), chairman, America’s Promise—The Alliance For Youth; former President Nelson Mandela of South Africa; the President’s former political consultant Dick Morris; former Senior Adviser for Policy and Strategy George Stephanopoulos; and former Chief of Staff Thomas F. (Mack) McLarty. The President also referred to Vice President Al Gore’s debate with Reform Party candidate Ross Perot on the North American Free Trade Initiative on November 9, 1993. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Chemical Weapons

December 22, 1999

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

In accordance with the resolution of advice and consent to ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, adopted by the Senate of the United States on April 24, 1997, I hereby certify in connection with Condition (7)(C)(i), Effectiveness of Australia Group, that:

Australia Group members continue to maintain an equally effective or more comprehensive control over the export of toxic chemicals and their precursors, dual-use processing equipment, human, animal, and plant pathogens and toxins with potential biological weapons application, and dual-use biological equipment, as that afforded by the Australia Group as of April 25, 1997; and,

The Australia Group remains a viable mechanism for limiting the spread of chemical and biological weapons-related materials and technology, and the effectiveness of the Australia Group has not been undermined by changes in membership, lack of compliance with common export controls and nonproliferation measures, or the weakening of common controls and nonproliferation measures, in force as of April 25, 1997.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Albert Gore, Jr., President of the Senate: This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 23.

Statement on the Death of Tom Henderson

December 23, 1999

Hillary and I were deeply saddened to learn of the death of Tom Henderson, a

member of my Advisory Council on HIV and AIDS and a senior staff person at the Environmental Protection Agency. Tom was a longtime friend to both of us and combined great intelligence with a sharp Texas wit. He was a strong and effective advocate for our efforts to combat AIDS, the disease that eventually took his life. We will miss Tom, as will members of the Council, his colleagues at the EPA and the White House, and the hundreds of people around the country who were blessed to know him as a friend. Our thoughts and prayers are with his partner Michael, his daughter Melissa, and all of those like us who grieve his loss.

Christmas Greeting to the Nation

December 24, 1999

The President. On this holiest of holidays, Hillary and I would like to wish all of you a very merry Christmas. This is a season of joy, a time for family and friends to rejoice in one another's company and in the magic of Christmas. This is also the season of peace.

On behalf of all Americans, I'd like to send a special greeting to the brave men and women in uniform who are serving our country in lands far from home. Thank you for the greatest gift of the season, for protecting our Nation and safeguarding the blessings we all hold dear.

The First Lady. At the dawn of this new millennium, let us reflect on our hopes, our dreams, and the gifts we can give to the future. So let all of us cherish the gift of every child among us and pledge to build a world where all children, no matter where they are born, can make their dreams come true.

The President. From our family to yours, Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, and may God bless you all.

NOTE: The greeting was videotaped at approximately 2:30 p.m. in Room 459 in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building for later broadcast and was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 23 but was embargoed for release until 12:01 a.m., December 24. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this greeting.